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Friday, June 7, 2002

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council  
Big Sur Lodge

RE: Continued discussion of the expansion of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary south

Councilmembers:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this council on an issue which I and thousands of others consider to be vital for San Luis Obispo County. The expansion of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary south to Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo and Avila is not a new concept. However, there has been much negative input from what we consider to be a very vocal minority. I am here today to request that you place this issue further up on your priority list and include it in your agenda for your next meeting which is in Cambria, closer to us, in August. With the changes in the country and in Washington, it is more imperative that we protect our shores from future oil drilling, besides the obvious need to make sure that we are safeguarding our coastline and protecting it for our future generations.

There has been loud contention about this issue by that vocal fisherman minority, and we sometimes forget that all of us want to make sure we hand down a healthy ocean to our children. No one wants to destroy the bays and waterways. But, somewhere along the way, there has arisen a division in paths, which has created an "us and them" schism. We need to step back, remember the priorities, remove the politics, and do the work which will provide the best protection as soon as possible.

You have been sent letters representing thousands of residents over the past few months in support of an extension south. In a letter to you from January of this year, Mayor Alan Settle, speaking for the City Council of San Luis Obispo wrote, "I would like to express our support for the extension of the boundaries of existing sanctuaries to cover San Luis Obispo coastal areas." Recently the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club also wrote you, representing over 2,000 members, stating the same sentiments, requesting you discuss this item at your next meeting in Cambria. Supervisor Shirley Bianchi of San Luis Obispo also sent you a letter requesting continued discussion because "my constituents have voiced overwhelming support of this expansion." Leon Panetta sent me a letter which said, "I support the protection of Morro Bay either as an extension of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary or through creation of a separate sanctuary." He has already voiced this opinion to your Director. In March of this year, the SLO Coast Alliance, a consortium of major environmental organizations in SLO, representing thousands of members voiced the same support in a letter to the Port San Luis Harbor Commission.

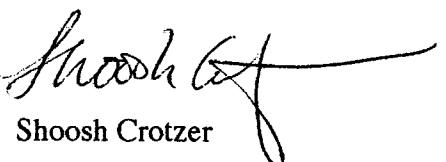
Besides the above contacts, I personally have spoken with Joy Fitzhugh of the SLO Farm Bureau, Mike Multari of the National Estuary Program, and Pam Heatherington of ECOSLO and they all have also voiced their support of continued discussion of this expansion. Both the NEP and ECOSLO have also sent you letters of support. Pam and I are meeting with the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 1,400 businesses next week, to present the issue at their next meeting.

So, as you can see, contrary to some of the input you have received so far, there is tremendous support in favor of an expansion. There are a number of issues which have been misconstrued and others which simply do need to be addressed before any informed, educated definitive decisions can be made. I will not go into detail on the specifics of what these points are here, but instead want to use them to show the reason why further discussion is so important. Here are just a few examples of why we need further discussion:

1. Local control seems to be one of the areas of most concern. I have contacted the National Sanctuary in the Florida Keys and have learned that there are many ways which this can be addressed. When these sanctuary areas become so large, regional headquarters can be successfully established as they have done there. This information needs to be included in our discussions.
2. The data that the fishermen are unhappy with needs to be presented in a more scientific fashion to allay the concerns about its validity. The Florida sanctuary originally began with concerns voiced by the fishermen there, but have since been resolved.
3. The issue of dredging and oversight by the Sanctuary needs to be clarified.
4. The hierarchy of oversight needs to be explained better for all to understand.
5. Most importantly, what are the alternatives if this is not discussed. NOTHING? The majority of residents feel that it will be better to work out the kinks which are being contested from within the protection of sanctuary status, than to do nothing and let the oceans be depleted and ignored. To create a separate, new Central Coast National Sanctuary would take at least 10 years through an act of Congress. We do not have those ten years to wait. It will be too late by then. We must act now.

Therefore, in closing, I urge you to return to this topic at your next meeting in Cambria on August 2. More public input is necessary and since the meeting will be local to us, there will be more participants. Thank you for your time. I look forward to future meetings and discussions on this expansion.

Sincerely,

  
Shoosh Crotzer